

Gertrude, I earned. I bit my nails quite badly. Mother tried everything to break me of the habit, and finally hit on the promise of a glorious doll. By superhuman effort I did stop, and was rewarded by a doll so big that she satisfied even me. She was glamorous blonde, and had a trunk full of lovely clothes. Mother never did anything by halves, and she loved to dress dolls.

When I think about the situation in our family and think of all the love that was lavished on me, I just wonder how one little mite could have been so cherished. Father and mother had lost the baby before me and I was a much wanted child, and very much the beloved baby, for Tommy and Mamie were fifteen and thirteen years older than I, respectively. Grandma and grandpa, having lost two girls of their own, had a particular fondness for little girls and made me their special pet. My darling Aunt Hattie had lost her own little girl and her boys were grown, and she and Uncle Frank took me for their very own. I adored them, and some of my happiest times were spent with them. They never tired of telling of the time I taught my dignified uncle, a minister, how to skip. There, too, was Aunt Sally and her maid, Katie, who must have spoiled me shamefully.

I don't think that anybody spanked me except mother. I remember once that I ran off downtown. I was brought home and solemnly marched into the bathroom and paddled. I remember weeping on the floor in front of the dining room fireplace, not ~~so~~ much from pain as from surprise that mother would do such a thing to me.

Father spanked me only once, and mother said it almost killed him. He never could do it again. I was sliding on the cellar door, and he told me to stop it. I went blithely on with the sliding, and he just took down my panties and worked on me.

I was very shy as a child. At my grandparent's golden wedding anniversary, I refused to leave my father's arms. (Grandfather got me all my

My hair was taffy blonde, and Mrs Schmoldt, Jeanette's mother, once told me that I looked just like a little German girl. I thought she meant an Amish girl, of course, and was very much offended.

all my clothes for that occasion in Chicago.) When I was baptized, however, I loved Mr. Johnson, our minister, so dearly that I crawled out of father's arms to go to him.

One thing that my mother did in the face of an embattled family: she had my hair cut. Mamie's curls had never been cut, and her hair was always very thin, and mother determined that I should have a decent head of hair. I well remember the occasion, or rather the prelude, for I was in father's office leaning against his safe and weeping my heart out, because I was perfectly certain that the cutting would be very painful, like cutting your finger. Perhaps it was my terror that made mother stop first at the office. Father must have reassured me, for I have no further remembrance of the occasion.

I often think of the kind of looking girl I would have been if it hadn't been for him. As a baby I was crosseyed. Mother held me, and he held my head firmly with one hand, and with the other moved a bright, interesting object back and forth. Thus he exercised the eye muscles until they were perfectly straight. When I began to walk, one foot was clubbed. He strapped it with adhesive tape until the muscles developed to hold it correctly.

I had a hernia, too. He would put me flat on the floor with a pillow under my hips until it went back into place, and then strapped me with a piece of adhesive tape with a button under it. I was never allowed to jump the rope or leap from high places. I never was strong, and all my life he pounded it into my mind: "If you don't take care of yourself, nobody can do it for you."

His medicine for me he usually flavored with peppermint, and I always associate the flavor with him. I had a wonderful time when I was sick, with father and mother both to take care of me. I really enjoyed myself.

I had the childhood diseases while I was little. With the measles, grandma's maid, Ida Lytle, brought me a pink plate with flowers on it. I loved it, and ate every meal from it until I was a great big girl.

The rumps were memorable because mother got them from me. She had gone through childhood, cared for Mamie and Tommy, and then had to take them from me. She was very ill.

Tommy was simply a god to me. He was only medium height, but he seemed immense. My great ambition was to be able to lean my elbow on the top of the piano as he did.

I remember the time I first saw him smoke a cigarette. It was on the porch of our Chataqua tent, and I told him off properly, to his great amusement. (A "Chataqua tent"? Well, in those days everybody who was anybody went to Pontiac for a couple of weeks to live in tents in the park on the river bank, and attend lectures and concerts by broken down politicians and grand opera stars.)

I was always glad to get home from there to my own bed. Mother and father slept in a folding bed in the living room and I was close alongside on a red ~~velvet~~ ^{plush} couch that was made up at night. One of mother's pictures, a cat and some kittens, hung over me.

I used to be troubled by growing pains in my legs, and night after night mother used to take me over in bed with her and rub my legs until they eased and I could sleep again. Until I went to college she heard my prayers every night. Always I said "Now I lay me--"

I went everywhere with her to all her club meetings, and always sat very quietly on a little stool at her knee. I was always their pet, and it has given me a love of older women that has never left me.

No one enjoyed a joke better than my father, even on himself, and no one laughed more heartily than he the time he fell down the back ^{porch} ~~steps~~ steps. He was carrying out a big pan of ashes early one morning. The steps were icy, and he missed his footing. Instinctively he threw up his

hands to keep his balance, with a resulting shower of ashes over himself as he cascaded down the steps. That was one morning he was late to the office.

I used to go with him on his calls sometimes and he used to let me drive the livery horses.

I also used to go over to grandpa Beach's often. Once in a while I would drop in for breakfast. If there was gravy, grandpa always gave me lots.

I was afraid to go alone upstairs over there. One time mother sent me over to get some soap from grandma. She didn't want to climb the stairs, and so she sent me up the back way to the trunk room to get it. There was a peculiar "closed up" odor up there, that, to me, was always heart stopping. I flew up those stairs, grabbed the soap, and flew down again with all the bugaboos in the world hot on my heels.

It was always my job to go after the milk, for father didn't keep a cow any more. When I got it at grandfather's they brought it in from the country in the evening, and it was dark when I started back home. In those days much stained glass was used in the windows, and, in our front door, illuminated by the light from the kitchen, was a "bull's eye," and evil looking thing that always sent me around the house at fifty miles an hour.

Grandma made me several beautiful picture books that I have always kept; and on my tenth birthday she called me over and gave me a gorgeous *self* "log cabin" quilt that she had made me herself. It was her last piece of work.

On my first birthday Tommy was sixteen. It was at the time that William Jennings Bryan was running for President on Free Silver 16 to 1. Mother marked the cake 16-1.

I must have been seven or eight years old when our ^{house} caught on fire. It was Thanksgiving day, and Tommy was home from college with some friends.

We were eating dinner at grandmother's when they saw the smoke rolling. (defective wiring.) The boys saved the house and got most of the furniture out, altho the "fence" that belonged on the old Lewis cradle was burned, and we lost many books from the water, which did the most damage. Grandmother and I watched from her window.

The loss of the books must have been a special blow to my parents, for they loved books. One of my earliest memories is mother and Mamie taking turns reading Tom Sawyer aloud and stopping to laugh. My very first collection of books was of Mark Twain. I saved my money for months, and, when we went to Peoria, mother would take me to the book department at Shipper and Blocks and give me the ecstasy of picking out the new volume. Always she tried to impress it on me to buy good books that I would always be proud to own. I got my sets of Dickens and Scott with the money I made in doing housework. Mother was ill, and father was having a difficult time to find someone to help. I told him not to worry, that I would manage everything. It made him so happy that he told me that, if I would do so, he would pay me the maid's wages. I made good and got the money, and spent every cent of it for books. (In Paris I passed right by the fascinating shops with only a casual glance, but got strung up for hours in Brentano's book shop.)

I have always loved books, but I was anything but a spectacular success in school. Arithmetic I perfectly loathed, and, year after year, I just got through in it. To this day, I still count on my fingers and can't add a bridge score without great mental effort, tho I was a wizard in Algebra; I was fair in spelling, liked reading, but I shone in physiology. Right now, I can name all the bones of the body and some of the muscles and membranes.

My music teacher who came to give me vocal lessons asked me, coyly, what a hiccup was. I gravely replied, "A spasmodic contraction of the diaphragm," and the lady almost swooned.

The first grade in school was made memorable by my first humiliation. It was winter and I was wearing a little grey fur muff that grandpa had given me, and I had filled it with Puffed Rice, which was then new on the market. The children came back into the schoolroom to put on their wraps and I forgot the muff's contents, and upended it. The teacher scolded me and made me pick up every grain.

In the second grade I was chosen queen of the May; and Annie Walker, a kindly overgrown darkey girl, appointed herself my personal guardin. Not a soul dared cross me when Annie was around.

The third grade left a permanent stamp on everybody in my class. Our teacher was Elizabeth Moran who was a demon for order and neatness. Anyone dropping anything had to stand up by their seat until classes were dismissed, either for recess or to go home. Just once completely broke me. I didn't mind the standing up, but to have to stand up with Wesley Philhour, whom I loathed, was too much for my sensibilities.

This same teacher made us bring little bottles of vinegar to use to scrub the tops of our desks. If we didn't use all there was in the bottle we drank it with relish on our way home.

The fourth grade was memorable because of the smallpox epidemic. Mary Ann Alexander's mother caught it, but did not know what was making her feel badly. She was visiting, and came back home on the train with a number of Fairbury people. When the disease was identified, the Board of Health ordered everybody to be vaccinated. They told us about it in school, and I went up to father's office that afternoon to get mine. When I opened the door I found both the consulting and reception rooms were crowded with people holding out bloody arms, waiting for the next thing to be done to them. I backed out of there in a hurry, and decided that mine could wait.

I was vaccinated at home, and father put it on the calf of my leg "where it couldn't show", never dreaming that ladies' skirts someday would get short and stay that way. Everyone else was vaccinated on the arm and wore little transparent cups over the scars, which were large, and the scabs they covered were horrid looking. Manie was present once when mother changed the bandages on my leg, and fainted dead away. It was the first time I had seen anyone faint, and for years I yearned to faint picturesquely, too.

I took great interest in medical things, and loved to help father fill capsules. He also let me play with his electric battery. It was a very efficient machine worked by a crank, and I got some noble shocks out of it.

One funny thing that happened to us was when I was older and had a bad sore throat. Instead of painting it, he blew a powder into it. For this he creased the paper lengthwise and put the powder on it. This time, just as he had his mouth open ready to blow, I accidentally coughed and he got all the powder down his own throat.

Once in a while father would get so busy that he would forget to have his hair cut. His hair was beautiful. It was dark, very thick and curly, and it lay in a marcel wave that came straight out of a dream. When he got warm it stood up in tight little curls all over his head. One time, when it got too long, mother and I tied pink ribbons on it.

All of us children inherited his blue eyes, but none of us really had his beautiful Roman nose. Tommy and Manie both had his curls. Tommy hated his, and used to plaster them down with water, but when they dried they curled tighter than ever. Their hair was all very light as children and turned dark when they were about fifteen. It always distressed father that I remained a blonde.

Because I was very blonde, though, Mother had more or less of an ear

time shopping for me. I could wear almost any color.

All our shopping was done in Peoria at Shipper and Blocks. We took the early morning train, and I never will forget how cold those dark, early morning hours seemed. That train got us into Peoria a short time before the stores opened. We had lunch in the tea room on the top floor of Block's, and then, if we had finished, spent the afternoon with Jeanette and Tommy.

I always had pretty clothes, but mother saw that they were suitable ones. I wasn't allowed fathers in my hats, and I didn't have bracelets. Aline Hilsabeck, one of the girls in my grade at school, wore them in quantities, huge gold filled ones that clanked when she moved her arms. She was very generous and often allowed me to wear some. It seemed to me that I would achieve perfect happiness if I could have just one bracelet like Aline's. I started a good lively campaign at home and finally, when mother and Mamie went to Chicago, they said they would bring me one. I opened the package they gave me, actually trembling with anticipation, and to the longest day I live I will never forget the flood of bitter disappointment when I saw it. I look at that exquisite little bangle now, and chuckle, but it was no laughing matter then. I never said a word to them, but Jeanette must have read my mind, because she gave me a big Delta Tau Delta (his fraternity) bracelet, that Tommy had given to her, and I loved that.

With the death of grandma Beach my whole life changed. We came over to grandfather's house to care for him. One afternoon mother, Mamie and I were sitting with him in the living room, when he suddenly roused from thought and said, "Elly, you'll never live ten years more." It was never mentioned but the terror never left me, and I would wake in the middle of the night to cry myself back to sleep alone, wondering how in the world I could ever do without my mother.

After grandfather died, we moved into his house. That always seems

Since my own experience of bringing my family to grandfather's home has so nearly paralleled my mother's, I can appreciate her mental attitude that made her change it to the Lewis home. And as such it became known. She disposed of nearly all of the heavy walnut furniture, took down the heavy old family portraits, put in new bathrooms and electric lights; and, at my behest, painted the woodwork white and took down the grille and portiers between the living and dining rooms. Most significant, the T. A. Beach in the tile at the top of the porch steps, was chiseled out and replaced by plain pieces.

Father sold his medical practice to a Doctor Kuhn, and our old home to Jay Claudon. A family by the name of Wells, with eight children, lived there for a time, and I remember standing at the window to watch them. Our house was always so lonely.

Mamie was married in the bay window of the living room where mother and I were. I must have acted disgracefully about Mamie getting all the attention and new clothes, for father took me out on the porch and gave me a "talking to", and mother took me in to the library and gave me all of grandma Beach's Samantha Allen books by Marietta Holley. I adored them, and had read them over and over and over, curled up in the big red rocker in grandma's living room. (My conscience finally made itself heard, months later, and I gave them back to her.)

I dearly loved to read, and even then I would have rather received a book for Christmas than anything else. I think I must have been nine when I got "Elsie Dinmore." I teased so incessantly for one of my presents beforehand that Mother finally wearied and gave me the book, and I settled down to a perfect orgy of tears over that noble and insufferable little heroine. Mother was completely disgusted.

I was a terrible disappointment to my father; coming from a musical family himself, and having had one of his own, it was a blow to have a child who braced herself every time music was mentioned. I have tried to figure out my attitude from a psychologist's standpoint: when I was a baby, I used to be put in my buggy with a bell while the family practiced. Still, I don't think that explains it adequately, because I am quite sure that I got every attention every time I cried.

Now, on the other hand, the piano problem was quite understandable. My teacher was Edith Mitten, an intimate friend of Mamie's, who had lost her father and who had to make the living for the family. She hated teaching music with the desperation of a trapped animal, and her own playing was of the mechanical variety that just sets ones teeth on edge. I remember of coming home from lessons and throwing my music roll clear across the living room. But mother saw that I practiced! She sat beside me on the piano stool, and kept me at it until I nearly fell off from weariness and boredom unspeakable.

The Recitals alone were enough explanation. Twenty five seething children were herded into Mitten's back bedroom just off the living room that had been cleared of all furniture save the piano. Across the open hall in the parlor sat the suffering mothers.

We all hated recitals, except, possibly, Mildred Compton (Barbara Foster's mother) who was the star of the class. She played beautifully.

I think that it was that final recital that broke Edith Mitten and drove her into Y. W. C. A. work. Jim Churchill, who was later murdered, electrified everyone by appearing with only the right half of his shoes polished. At morning rehearsal the piano had been turned so that only one side of his shoes showed. Unfortunately, Edith moved it again, so that the audience had the rear view.

Harry Foster rendered a Marche Militaire. It was a "Rendering" alright

As a baby I loved singing in church. Father
Mother and I always sat in the back pew,
center aisle, on the right hand side as we
looked to the Altar. When the congregation
rose to sing, father stood me up on the seat.
I knew all the words to Onward Christian
Soldiers, and loved it.

Something Edith
sition straight
the loud pedal.
frenzy of sound

Mother and
but I guess they
against such co

Then, find
weren't popular
alto horn for
been, that, if
the thing, what
and when he said
"Abide With Me"
Berkeley to ent
us and we took
breakdown and
Northwestern Un

I was one
I came back to
to a dance Fri
their hair bob

I was wear
covered the gro

When I was
where alone b
there weren't
when I was beg
the limit with
Father even tau

Something Edith did or said maddened him, and he played the entire composition straight through to the end - fortissimo - without once releasing the loud pedal. One never would believe a piano could be capable of such frenzy of sound. (*I played Handel's "Largo."*)

Mother and father next tried vocal lessons on me. There were a few, but I guess they and the teacher all felt that it was futile to struggle against such colossal indifference.

Then, finally, father hit on the idea of the saxaphones. (They weren't popular as they are now.) He got a tenor one for himself, an alto horn for mother, and a squealy soprano for me. His theory must have been, that, if we all played together, I would get into the spirit of the thing, whether or no. He was the conductor of that family orchestra, and when he said practice, by golly we practiced. We staggered through "Abide With Me" and the simpler classics, and when we all went out to Berkeley to enter me in the University of California, the horns went with us and we took lessons. We stopped them when I had a complete nervous breakdown and had to be taken out of school. The next year I went to Northwestern University (without the saxaphone.)

I was one of the first girls at Northwestern to bob my hair, and when I came back to Fairbury over the weekend and I created a furore. I went to a dance Friday night, and by Sunday morning half the girls in town had their hair bobbed.

I was wearing rouge now, too. Mother didn't say anything--father covered the ground.

When I was thirteen father taught me to drive, and I was driving everywhere alone by the time I was sixteen. (I hope Ella doesn't see that; but there weren't all these laws then) Mother flatly refused to go with us when I was beginning. She said that her nervous system had been pushed the limit with grandpa, father and Tommy, and it couldn't stand any more. Father even taught me to grease the car. You didn't go to the gas station

for that in those days. We used to have lots of fun working together.

I was twenty/^{two}when I edited my first book. Mother and father's missionary to China, Eva Gregg, sent back diaries for them to read. They were so delightful that we decided to publish them. I undertook the editing and mother financed the publishing. The money from the sales went to build the "Ella Home", the nurse's home at the Tientsin hospital, named for my mother and Eva's mother. I was so modest that I did not even sign my name to the foreward that I wrote, although father begged me to do so, and was disgusted when I refused.

In college I specialized in English and History, and minored in French, all for a pre-legal course. I took law, not from any desire to become a legal light but because father was convinced that anyone with as much property as I had to manage needed a legal education. I learned just enough law to teach me that if I ever needed a lawyer, to go get a good one. But I solved that: I married one.

My chief memories of law are the difficulties of a lone blonde in a large class of boys.

One thing from Law school did have a little influence on the rest of my life. In spite of four years of preparation, I had enough hours but I lacked a course either in Public speaking or English Composition. Dean Wigmore sent me back to the Evanston Campus to take the Senior course in English Composition. I never would have dared attempt it if I hadn't been forced. Two thousand words minimum a week were required.

Forsythe, the professor, was a chubby little man who had shed every illusion in the classroom, but, if I do say it myself, I made an enormous hit with him because I liked to write funny things, and practically everything I wrote he read aloud in class. Twice he laughed so over them that he nearly fell out of his chair. One was an account of Virginia Ficklin as a child: she lost her gum in bed at night and found it in her hair.

The other was verbatim report of an experience with a "masher" on the train back from Champaign.

When the time came for our personal consultations, he gave me my most cherished compliment that I have ever had in my life: he told me that I have a masculine sense of humor; then hastened to assure me that he meant that in the complimentary sense, explaining that the feminine humor is a play on words, whereas the masculine deals with a situation, "like Jane Austen" (!)

I guess it is the Irish in me.

Funny, isn't it, how my legal training makes me enjoy going over old wills and histories, and the writing I do now is the compiling of family history.

1-130 95

94

~~21~~ 22 Back of 21
23

Oliver 96

97 Front & back

Page 30 A model father
Beach, long white
beard
(Uncle Tommy)

Twigs from Family
Tree by
Arona Lewis Jones
1942

A History of Fairbury

Fairbury was a real estate dealer's dream--or, to be exact, two real estate dealers. March owned West Fairbury, where Uncle Newt Fulton lived, and Amsbury owned East Fairbury. The rivalry between the two was bitter. If one had a coal mine, the other had a coal mine; if one put up a new grain elevator, the other put up a new grain elevator; if one built a flour mill, the other built a flour mill; so on to infinity.

If there was an argument between them they promptly went to law. They had one suit after another until they both went broke and had nothing left to fight about any more.

Partisanship between the two towns ran high among the citizens, and even the little boys were active. The street past the present town hall, north and south, was the dividing line, and any boy that outstepped the boundary promptly had the other gang after him with clubs. Uncle Newt's gang finally captured the territory as far as Bach's lumber yard.

No one, living in East Fairbury and coming in on the train, every dreamed of getting off at West Fairbury, and, needless to say, vice versa.

There were three depots: "Central Park" is now only a weed patch by the tracks in the west end. At that time it was a big wooden hotel with the depot on the first floor. This was the T. P. and W. station for West Fairbury; the depot in East Fairbury was up on stilts; the third, "The Thomas House," a big wooden hotel, stood on the vacant lot on the right hand side, south of the tracks, on the street going to Aunt Leona's. That was the Wabash station.

The T. P. and W. ("Take Pity and Walk", otherwise, "Toledo, Peoria and Western") built their line first, and, when the Chicago and Paducah railroad tried to go through, they would not allow them to cross their tracks. The Paducah owners just waited until Sunday, when the Court House in Pontiac was closed and the T. P. And W couldn't get an injunction, to

build their tracks through Fairbury, and ran a train over them. Both lines went down to Paducah Avenue, the best street in Fairbury.

(Paducah Ave is now known as Walnut St.)

The town - both section - had the "worst name" in this section of the country. One reason for this was that there were so many rough coal miners; for the miners used to be a big industry. Before a train entered the city limits the conductor would go the length of the cars bawling: "Fair-bury! Fair-bury! Close your windows! Close your windows!"

If the passengers were natives they took the warning seriously and stayed behind glass. Then the boys on the depot platform would stage a big fight. That was too much for curiosity, every time, because they were good fights. The windows would come open, out pop the heads, and--bing!--came the pies.

The McDowell boys, captained by Elmer, were at the bottom of most of the mischief around town. They were known as "limbs of Satan", and grandfather Filley never liked to have grandmother James go out with any of them. The pie throwing at the station was their speciality. There was a restaurant near the depot where they got them (history not stating whether they were purchased or stolen, probably they were stolen) and raspberry or black berry pies were preferred. (remember that all this was long before the days of movies)

They varied the pie program with "car dough." In warm weather they would open the hot boxes on the coaches and scoop out the lubricant, or "car dough," with sticks. They made brilliant facial effects on the passengers.

The McDowell boys were forever playing tricks, even on their own father. During church they would take the taps off his buggy. The old gentleman, in his best clothes, and with all his neighbors watching, would get in and start to drive off, only to lose the wheels, one after the other.

They did it time after time, just to hear the old man sputter. No boys, however, could have been more sympathetic with a parent. They were always so sorry that anyone should have done such a thing.

Sometimes they got a little rough and threw sod in the windows of a "Protracted Meeting." If they did not like a circus, they threw rocks on top of the tent or cut the guy ropes. The circus grounds were where the Blade building now stands, and one time they tied the tent to the back of a freight train. When the train pulled out, the tent ^{went} with it, leaving a mightily astonished crowd behind it.

Sometimes things got beyond the "good clean fun" stage, if you want to call it that. I. P. McDowell, Elmer's father, lived near the Nussbaum swimming hole, ^{just east of town} and, when Fairbury had the Methodist Conference, Mrs. McDowell had a number of the ministers as guests. They had to walk back uptown to their meeting after supper when it was dark, and the McDowell boys slipped up behind them and cracked them on the head with a length of hose. Then they ran home and got into bed. They were "asleep" when I. P. rushed home after the outrage to make sure his boys weren't guilty. Their father's gullibility saved them, but it was so much fun that they decided to do it again. They hid in the dark alleys of the "Arcade Block" with their pieces of hose, taking swats at men passing by, and a number of them were stunned. Finally they were caught and arrested, and were fined \$9.45 a piece. After the trial the Blade came out with the headlines: "Rubber Hose \$9.45 a foot."

As before stated, partisanship ran high in Fairbury. During the Civil War the feeling was bitter between the Union men and the ^(Southern Sympathizers) "Copperheads." The Fitzgeralds, Barnes, Hieronymous, Darnall and Spense families were all Copperheads and some of them were "bad actors." They had an organization called "The Knights of the Golden Circle," and Adlai Stevenson

was the head of this. (This seems laughable now, when all good Bloomingtonians are supposed to bow down and knock their heads on the floor three times at the mention of his name, because he later became Vice President; but Uncle Newt, as Editor of the Blade had positive proof of this.)

Then, too, there were the religious factions, and there was much feeling, particularly between the Protestants and Catholics. (The Am^hburys, owners of East Fairbury, were Infidels.) As a little fellow, Uncle Newt happened to be up in the McDowell Hall, which was over a dry goods store in the Arcade Block, watching a dance. Things were nicely under way, when the priest got up on the platform at one end of the hall and announced that he didn't want his girls dancing with Protestant boys. One of the men grabbed Uncle Newt when the fight started and put him behind the benches which had been piled along the wall, telling him to be sure and stay there, but Uncle Newt said that he had no desire to get out. The Protestant boys just cleaned up the place. They would knock out a Catholic boy and then throw him down the stairs: the stairs were long and nearly as steep as a ladder. There wasn't one of them left.

Along with all this, there was a feud in Fairbury that lasted for years. No lives were lost, but the damage was terrific, and for years no property owner in Fairbury was able to get fire insurance. Almost every night there was a fire. The man whose building went up in smoke the night before would figure that he knew who did the job, and he would slip over on the other side of town and set fire to the other man's house.

Andy Claudon (Uncle Ches' Uncle) was brought to trial for burning down the place where he was living. He had a bad reputation for crooked dealing, but he was engaged to Judge McDowell's daughter, whom he afterwards married, and she used all her influence at home. Her father managed to keep it in his Justice of the Peace Court instead of letting them take ^{it} him to the Circuit Court at Pontiac, where ^{it} he belonged. The main evidence

in the trial was the drips from a kerosene can along the stairs from the cellar to Andy's room; but the Judge was smart. In a short time the whole trial hung on the question: were the drips made from the upstairs going down, or from the downstairs going up? (The fire started in the cellar.) The jury eventually was so befuddled that they let him go.

Then too, with so many miners living here, Fairbury was known as an "awful town for drinking". Every night there were three or four fights. "good, bloody ones." The miners were mostly concerned with these, but Fairbury had one bully who picked a lot of them just for the fun of fighting. He was Joe Urrick, a butcher's assistant. He was a huge man, a bully and a bruiser. A half a beef was nothing for him to carry, and he could throw a barrel of salt into a wagon. Those barrels weighed 250 pounds. He was never drunk when he fought, because he held his liquor so well that it would have taken all the whisky in town to get him drunk.

He met his match in a farmer. Clark was a tall, rawboned fellow with long arms and heavy fists; also, he was sober, and he was Rolling for a Turkey.

Now in Rolling for a Turkey, the Turkey itself was tied to a post at one end of the field. The contestant was blindfolded and given a wheelbarrow, but before he started they turned him around three times. After that he didn't have the least idea which way the turkey was, and the spectators had a hilarious time.

Clark won the Rolling, and Urrick, who wanted the bird for himself, got mad and threatened Clark, telling him to take off his coat. Clark refused to take off his coat because it was cold. Urrick grew abusive, and then the fight began. Hard work and clean living gave Clark the advantage over Urrick's weight, for the big man got winded, and then Clark just beat him to ribbons.

Urrick's cronies decided to do something about it; so later that afternoon they ganged Clark. Clark hit one of them so hard that he lifted him clear off his feet and smashed him through a plate glass window. Then he turned on the other one, who ran into the store. When Clark caught him, he hit him a crack that sent him into the stove and knocked it down.

Urrick eventually had to leave town, for one night he tried to pick a fight with a much smaller man. His victim became so frightened that he pulled a gun, put it in his own mouth, and pulled the trigger. For some reason it didn't kill him, but popular feeling ran so high that Urrick had to leave town.

There were plenty of other fighters, too. The Tom Smith family, from north of town, used to come in, do their "trading", get drunk, and clean out the town.

Out of town boys weren't allowed to call on the Fairbury girls. The first time they came they were given warning. The second time, if they chose to run the risk, the gang just waited until he was in his best clothes and approaching his loved ones house, and then he was thoroughly rotten egged. Only, it didn't work with grandfather James. He just beat them up so badly that they were too glad to let him alone.

It was grandfather James, too, who saved Marsh Park for Fairbury. The original Marsh, the founder of West Fairbury, had given a square block of land for a city park. Later, when all his wealth had been lost by lawsuits, his heirs would have liked very much to regain their piece of land so that they might sell it for building lots. All they needed to do to establish title was to move a house with a family in it on the ground. Grandfather was an alderman then, and, one day when he was riding around on his horse, he happened to pass the Park. The place had a picket fence around it, and a section of this was down. A block or so away, coming up the street, being moved, was a house. Grandfather put two and two

together and hurried off to get the other members of the Council; and, while one of them drove to Pontiac to get the injunction, grandfather sat on his horse with his gun in front of him, guarding that gap in the fence. He sat there all day until the papers came from Pontiac.

Fairbury is quite different now than it was then. Every house had a picket fence around it. All the sidewalks were board walks, and all the streets were dirt, becoming knee deep mud when it rained. For drainage there were deep ditches on each side, and after a rain they were full of water, necessitating bridges across them. At grandfather Filley's they had a "run up" over the ditch to get into the buggy and on their horses. This was very stylish. On each side of it was a post with a ring to tie the horses.

When the Masonic fraternity was organized here, feeling among the wives ran high. A secret society was almost more than they could bear. The men got in rather late from the meetings, anyway. One wife did get even with her spouse. He was out quite late and was very tired when he got back, but she kept him hopping around for the rest of the night. She was very "sick" and needed a lot of attention.

Just after the Civil War almost all the school teachers were soldier's widows. Their pensions were only ten dollars a month and they were compelled to make their own living.

Nobody can write about early Fairbury without mentioning Doc Ostrander. Were he alive today, he would indubitably (get that, Ollie?) be president of the Liars Club. He was an artist at it, and some of his stories were classics.

Once, he said, he was driving like mad to get home ahead of a bad storm, when he lost a wheel of his buggy. He was going so fast that it didn't make a bit of difference, and when he got into the barn lot he turned around, and here came the dog with the wheel.

People have remembered his splendid stories, but they have forgotten that, besides being a fine physician with a wonderful memory who was acquainted with every one in the county, he was a deeply benevolent man. He and his wife, who were childless, raised and educated eight little children. More than that, he was a staunch abolitionist. In 1850, the day after he came to Fairbury, he found a fugitive slave chained to the floor of a second story building waiting to be returned to his master in Virginia. Doc Ostrander had to go six miles (probably to Avoca) to get a buggy, and a chisel, crowbar and sledge to cut the negro's shackles. He drove him the hundred miles to Chicago, landing him there late in the afternoon of the next day. The fugitive was delivered to Dr. C. V. Lyer, who was connected with the underground railroad. With his help, the Negro was put on the boat for Canada. They paid the Captain well for this service, and gave the Negro \$10.00 for his own.

So history was made in Fairbury, too.

(See Page 12)

"Old man Oliver" was one of the grandest characters of the pioneer days. He was a quarter part Indian, but short and slender, with long black hair that turned white as he grew old.

His father was a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin, and Franklin presented him with a portrait of himself. Old man Oliver prized this painting greatly — one reason being that he kept five thousand dollars in the back of it.

He came to Illinois in 1825 on his way to California. In hunting a good place to camp for

the night, he found a grove and liked the look of the place. Upon entering it he ran into a Kickapoo Village and was immediately surrounded by Indians. Oliver at once drew his case knife and put it into a tree as a sign of peace, whereupon the Indians held a Council around the campfire. Presently they came & got him and took him to the Council fire where they smoked the pipe of peace. Oliver was a non smoker, but that was one time he was glad to indulge.

It was just before the Blackhawk war, however, and even after the pipe of peace the Indians were suspicious and watched him closely. He had to stay with them, for he didn't dare move on, and he got to like it there. He and his family lived in a teepee for a while and then the Indians helped build them a log cabin. As before stated, the Indians became fond of him and the Chief named his son after him, and after the Blackhawk war, Oliver took the village as his home.

years later (in the 1920's) the son of the Kickapoo chief came back to see the old grove. His grandfather had taken him on his knee and told him about it. Orville Oliver, the owner, had an Irishman plowing for him, and at the end of the row he looked up to see an Indian with long hair standing there. It nearly scared him to death.

Old Francis Oliver was a surveyor, and surveyed all this part of the country. He named Saunerman for an Indian chief.

He was noted all thru this section for his profanity, in which he excelled. When a man settled fifteen miles away he considered the neighborhood too crowded and went right over and cursed him out. And he insisted on paying a lawyer's fee with a deed to forty acres of land. Said acres turned out to be swamp and all under water.

(All that section around Chatsworth and La Hogue was swamp. When the country became well settled the farmers dug a drainage ditch and tiled it. The very next summer was dry, and some of the farmers in a panic pulled out their tile.)

It was this swamp that gave Old Man Oliver his exceedingly sinister reputation. There was a ridge of higher ground that went around it, and that could be safely traveled. Smaller animals and even deer could cut across, but horses or men would sink in it and never be heard of again. It was a common and widely accepted suspicion that Old Man Oliver murdered

And robbed travelers that lodged at his house -

The boy explanation was established by Old John Maple who went hunting over there as a boy. He happened to meet Old Man Oliver who told him of the ridge and warned him of the boy with an explosion of profanity that nearly pulverized the boy -

(These stories were told to me by Orville Oliver, the grandson)